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The Collector and Art Critic

tive study, an excellent record of the masterpieces of art.

("Michael Angelo." An Essay by Dr. George Gronau. With fifty illustrations. "Delacroix." An Essay by Henri Franz. With fifty illustrations. New York: Frederick Warne & Co. \$1. 25 each.)

From the Frederick A. Stokes Company has been received a booklet containing half-tone reproductions of Hanfstaengl's photographs of sixty of the works of Rubens. The selection has been made so as to adequately represent the various characteristics of Ruben's work. A helpful addition to the titles affixed to these illustrations is a statement of the place where the original is to be found.

The little book is a novelty and should find a sale among art students.

Collectors of art books should have the monograph on Homer Martin, which Mr. Macbeth has published. Not only does it offer an interesting appreciation of this great artist, written by his widow, but in its illustrations and general make-up it is a credit to the De Vinne Press.

Bibliophiles and those interested in collecting should hie themselves to Brooklyn and visit the Abraham & Straus store on Fulton Street, where they will see an exhibition of the utmost importance to them: early and modern American, English, Welsh and Continental bookplates, collected by Mr. Henry Blackwell, on view in the Book Department.

A full description of this collection will be found in the December number of this magazine.

STAGECRAFT

THE Avenue has no monopoly of art. Step across to the Gilded Way, the Aurora Borealis of New York, and you will find art in the theatre, used as a "peg to hang a tale upon." Of all the crafts the one most neglected in artistic discussion is stagecraft. I do not mean the histrionic side of the stage; I refer to the mounting of "the boards."

A vast stretch lies between the old ways—tallow dips for footlights, blue flies, and one parlor set for the last century's dramas—and the present perfection in presenting a *fin de siècle* spectacle. It never was told on the Rialto that hydraulic and electric machinery would take the bread out of the mouth of the erstwhile Jack-of-all-work, the property man of Garrick's time. Even today the populace does not realize how much of the sum total of a play's success is to be ascribed to the versatility and genius of the official in whose care is placed the grouping, scenery, costumes—the entire setting of the play. Every artist who paints a "drop" adds to or detracts from the perfection of

the whole. The late Sir Henry Irving was the pioneer in the field of stagecraft as we have it today. His scenes were tableaux, carefully planned and executed with consummate skill. He was the prince of stage directors. Then Richard Mansfield, his follower, excelled him in magnificence, and on they came until the present Hippodrome was built, which reached, perhaps, the apogee of this form of stagecraft—the production.

Surely the playwright has not improved. Shakespeare, Fielding, Corneille, hold their laurels. Nor can we say that Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, Ristori, or Grisi have been dethroned. But that particular part of the dramatic entertainment which appeals to the eye, the craft of the stage, has developed and its conquests and accomplishments are worthy of record and review in a magazine devoted to the development of all the arts.

As "a looker on in Verona," as blithely saith Warwickshire Will, I will take you this time to a new playhouse, "the Astor," to point out the artistry of its first productions.

Stagecraft



*The Picturesque Mr. Forbes-Robertson
as Cæsar at Fifty-four*

The interior of the new Astor Theatre is exceedingly tasteful and simple. While it does not follow any particular architectural style, the Greek designs employed in the decorations give a certain stamp of restful quietness to the whole. The enormous coach lanterns suspended from the roof in front of the proscenium arch do not mean anything in the general scheme, but still are effective in their way. The dado on the front curtain is an unique design of convoluting lines around weird figures that attract the attention without disturbing the repose of a waiting audience, and afford entertainment between the acts.

The initial presentation was Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," in which Miss Annie Russell took the gamboling part of mischievous Puck most acceptably. While the other parts were creditably filled, I must single out Miss Catherine Proctor for the superior manner in which she interpreted Hermia, daughter of Egeus. Her acting was unusually natural, sensibly restrained, yet not neglecting the least nuance of the character she portrayed.

The enchanted wood near Athens was a fine wood interior, and the scene which reproduced one of Alma Tadema's canvases was delightful in its artistic handling.

A few anachronisms in the costumes may be overlooked, although with proper

preparation they could have been made impeccable. It was an inaugural which led us to expect great things.

In *Cymbeline*, with Miss Viola Allen as Imogen, we had another dignified and effective Shakespearean production. It made us sigh for a Shakespeare theatre in New York, or at least one devoted to classical productions. The cumulative effect of a series of adequate presentations of such tragedies and comedies would be to attract not only audiences but actors who would draw audiences. It was interesting towards the touching and spiritual close of the play to see the effect of great literature in the glowing faces of some of the least inspired members of the cast. After we get a little into Shakespeare's atmosphere, so sharp a change from that of telephones, subways and newspapers, we find ourselves being penetrated by ennobling poetry, ennobling to both him who listens and him who speaks.

I sat too close to get the full effect of the stage pictures, but before it filled with figures the "Sea Coast, near Milford" seemed as broad and clear and strong as



*Miss Elliott as the Little Egyptian
Princess at Fifteen*

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a Michel. Imogen's apartment at night was also fine and simple in composition and the glimpse, between slender pillars, of white clouds flying over dark green trees against a sky of deep rich blue, almost peacock-blue, contained a suggestion for stained glass. And Iachimo's hand rising from the chest, followed by his scarlet figure, were touches which smote the eye as dramatically as did the lines the ear.

Magnificent at many points is "Cæsar and Cleopatra" at the New Amsterdam Theatre, and there are novelty, spice and shock in the stage pictures as well as in the lines which Mr. George Bernard Shaw has given the actors. Nothing more picturesquely gorgeous has been seen here than the last act, in which Cæsar departs, and nothing could be more novel and spicy and shocking, to dry-as-dust historians and archæologists, than Cæsar's first glimpse of Cleopatra, in which we are permitted to share. Her elderly lover, to be, "discovers" her asleep, alone, at night, on a heap of poppies under the shelter of a paw of the Sphinx. And the text matches the situation, as is

evinced by her invitation to "Come up and have the other paw."

Mr. Forbes-Robertson is Cæsar, with an accent on the "is," and Miss Gertrude Elliott is Cleopatra as Mr. Shaw intended her. It takes brilliant people to speak brilliant lines and Cæsar and Cleopatra are the equals of their parts.

At the Broadway, in "The Prince of India," the battle scene alone is worth the price of admission. It is an intensely exciting, rapidly moving picture, and the close is very impressive, when through the clouds of dust from the fallen walls one sees the stage heaped with dead. But the most artistic moment of this sort in the play occurs when a tableau is formed by a group of many men in armor who suddenly kneel in the great tent of Mohammed, which is lighted by a single taper. The audience hall in the palace of Blacherne is fine and broad in effect, as the arches have the appearance of great height. A word of commendation should be given the unusual and scholarly music of Dr. Horatio Parker, of Yale, which plays a serious part in this lavishly mounted spectacle.

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